

Matt Wieber, Chair
Bruce Wildie, secretary
Jason Barnard, Zoning Administrator
Mary Pitcher, Assistant Zoning Administrator

Robb Bollenberg, Vice Chair
Tim Flynn, Member
David Gardner, member

WEST BENZIE JOINT PLANNING COMMISSION

**BENZONIA TOWNSHIP HALL
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 1, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER- Call to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Wieber

ROLL CALL- In attendance: Bollenberg, Wildie, Wieber, and new member from Benzonia Township, David Gardner; excused Flynn. Also in attendance:

Zoning Administrator Barnard

Assistant Administrator Mary Pitcher

PUBLIC PRESENT- (9) including Jon Gallager, Jeanne Strathman, Cindy and Ron Gottschalk Lisa Pyne, and Steve Stephens.

AGENDA- A **Motion** by Wildie, **Support** by Bollenberg to accept the agenda as amended to include Assistant Pitchers' report; motion carried, all ayes.

MINUTES- All members reviewed the December 7, 2023 minutes A **Motion** by **Wildie Support** by **Gardner** to accept minutes from December 7, 2023 as presented; motion carried, all ayes.

PUBLIC INPUT

Bob Juras comments from Platte Township and inquired as to allowing one dwelling only on 27 acres and is interested in building an accessory structure as a dwelling.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Sunkissed Hills update: Benzonia Twp has received an appeal to the ZBA of the WBJPC's most recent decision. Benzonia Twp and their attorneys are currently in discussion with Sunkissed Hills LLC to decide the path forward.
2. Amendment discussion among all members:
 - a. accessory structures as dwellings- no language currently within the zoning ordinance. ZA states the R4 and R5 districts do allow for "eco" and "multi use" uses but very limited within the West Benzie Jurisdiction. Platte Township currently has a number of small

accessory structures being used as seasonal dwellings. The ZA passed out amendment 3.14 A, Temporary Building structures and uses. Gardner comments that all dwellings no matter the size should have minimum standards. ZA suggests working on 3.14 to address minimum footage.

- b. Chairman states incorporating Short Term Rental (STR) language is needed as accessory structures are being used for that purpose. Chairman also states campground language should be reviewed. Chairman states that both Townships want short term rental language to be addressed. The ZA states he will gather sample ordinances from our adjoining areas. Bollenberg explained the need for effective language and updating the amendments are a necessity.

NEW BUSINESS

1. 2024 calendar-

Chairman asks for input as to whether to continue monthly meetings or return to the bi monthly meeting schedule. Chair suggests March May, July, September and November as regular meetings and calling special meetings as necessary. A motion by Gardner to accept Bi-Monthly meetings as the 2024 official schedule, with meetings the 1st Thursday of the odd months, at 6pm. Support by Bollenberg; Motion carried all ayes, voice vote.

2. Assistant ZA report-

- A Crystal Lake Watershed overlay zoning work group has been formed. The group has representatives from each unit of government around the lake. The goal of the group is to determine if an updated, uniform ordinance for the entire watershed is possible, or to suggest amendments to the ordinances that would update them and bring them in closer to uniformity around the lake.

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A workshop is scheduled for 4pm February 6, 2024 at the Benzonia Township Hall.

-Pitcher attended a webinar on zoning for renewable energy systems and changes in legislation regarding local zoning for renewable energy projects. Local units of government cannot adopt zoning stricter than State regulations for renewable energy projects greater than 50 megawatts. Pitcher recommends creating solar ordinance language addressing solar farms under 50 megawatts, and she will continue to monitor State regulation updates for large scale projects.
-Benzonia Township has appointed a new ZBA member, and all members of the ZBA are taking an MSU Extension certification course.

PUBLIC INPUT

Steve Stephens comments that enforcement of zoning ordinance should be a priority

Abe from Fischer LP gas inquired about a property on US 31 near the Drive-in if a LP facility is an allowed use.

Lisa Pyne- asked about the Sunkissed Hills appeal, would like to see the meeting dates posted on the website

A **MOTION** to adjourn by Wildie, **SUPPORT** by Gardner at 7:05 pm.

Next meeting is March 7, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Michalak, recording secretary.